

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method of providing a soft, compressible and deformable grip element on a
2 gripping portion of an article, said method comprising:

3 providing a soft, compressible and deformable material over a rigid support
4 structure to form a soft outer layer over said rigid support structure, said soft, compressible
5 and deformable layer being formed such that said soft, compressible and deformable layer
6 alone, without the support of said support structure, would collapse on itself, and said support
7 structure, having a receiving channel defined therein, sized, shaped and configured for
8 receiving a portion of an article securely, and being sufficiently rigid and having a sufficient
9 wall thickness to maintain said receiving channel in an open configuration, said wall
10 thickness being as thin as possible and simple in shape so as to not add undue bulk to said
11 grip element; and

12 placing said support structure over the gripping portion of the article, thereby
13 providing a soft, compressible and deformable layer over the gripping portion of the article.

1 2. A method according to claim 1, further comprising first extruding or molding
2 said support structure and then molding said soft, compressible and deformable material over
3 said support structure.

1 3. A method according to claim 1, further comprising co-molding said soft outer
2 layer and said support structure.

1 4. A method according to claim 3, further comprising co-molding said soft outer
2 layer and said support structure by a two-shot two-material injection molding process.

1 5. A method according to claim 1, further comprising coextruding said soft,
2 compressible and deformable material with a more rigid material to form said soft,
3 compressible and deformable material as a covering over said rigid support structure.

1 6. A method according to claim 1, further comprising molding said soft,
2 compressible and deformable material over said support structure.

1 7. A method according to claim 1, further comprising extruding or molding said
2 support structure.

1 8. A method according to claim 1, wherein said support structure is formed
2 without complex manufacturing equipment.

1 9. A method according to claim 8, wherein said support structure is open-ended.

1 10. A method according to claim 1, wherein:
2 said article is a finger-manipulable article; and
3 said soft, compressible and deformable layer is sufficiently deformable and
4 thick to permit shifting in a direction other than a radial direction in response to application of
5 finger gripping pressure thereto.

1 11. A method according to claim 1, wherein said grip element has a substantially
2 tubular shape and at least one of a constant thickness and a constant outer diameter.

1 12. A method of providing a soft, compressible and deformable grip element on a
2 gripping portion of an article, said method comprising:

3 extruding a support structure with a receiving channel defined therein, said
4 receiving channel being sized, shaped and configured for receiving a portion of an article
5 securely, and being sufficiently rigid and having a sufficient wall thickness to maintain said
6 receiving channel in an open configuration, said wall thickness being as thin as possible and
7 simple in shape so as to not add undue bulk to said grip element;

8 molding a soft, compressible and deformable material over said support
9 structure to form a soft outer layer over said support structure, said soft, compressible and
10 deformable layer being formed such that said soft, compressible and deformable layer alone,
11 without the support of said support structure, would collapse on itself; and

12 placing said support structure over the gripping portion of the article, thereby
13 providing a soft, compressible and deformable layer over the gripping portion of the article.

1 13. A method of forming a soft, compressible and deformable grip element for
2 positioning on a gripping portion of an article, said method comprising:

3 coextruding a soft, compressible and deformable material with a more rigid
4 material to form a soft, compressible and deformable material as a covering over a rigid
5 support structure with a receiving channel defined therein;
6 wherein said coextruding further comprises:
7 extruding said rigid material to be sufficiently rigid and to have a sufficient
8 wall thickness to maintain said receiving channel in an open configuration;
9 extruding said rigid material to have a wall thickness as thin as possible to not
10 add undue bulk to said grip element;
11 extruding said soft, compressible and deformable material such that said soft,
12 compressible and deformable layer alone, without the support of said support structure,
13 would collapse on itself.